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Statement submitted by Niger Delta Women's Movement for Peace and Development, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Social Protection Systems, Access to Public Services and Sustainable Infrastructure for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls

Women and girls facing double and multiple discrimination in Africa are among the furthest behind and need to participate in political processes and have access to social protection to achieve the Agenda 2030. This includes especially women and girls with disabilities.

The Africa Index Gender Equality Index 2015 indicated that, across Africa, women and men experience different opportunities, conditions, and privileges; they earn different wages, do not have the same access to education and are not always equal before the law. Lack of access to education puts a great barrier for women and girls from being empowered hence denying them from participating in political and socio-economic process. Specially those women and girls with a disability and from disadvantaged communities, continue to be left behind in both development and humanitarian actions. There is a need for the international community to promote the participation of these women in national, regional, and global institutions and processes in order to identify strategies and actions to empower women and girls who face double and multiple discriminations and ensure their participation and leadership in the implementation of the of internationally agreed development goals and other commitments, and the full realization of their human rights and dignity.

In reflection to this year's theme of the Commission on the Status of Women, "social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls" and in the Sustainable Development Goals principle of "Leave no one behind" and "The furthest behind first" we must confront and address multiple discrimination faced by women especially women with disability, women living in slum communities and above all disadvantaged women at all levels. The challenges faced by women especially women with disabilities include lack of access to public services and infrastructure

Currently, women and girls, especially those with disability and from disadvantaged communities, continue to be left behind in both development and political actions. There is absence or small presence of these groups in the institutions and processes of decision making.

The principles of equality and non-discrimination form the basis of all human rights instruments. It is therefore clear that as a matter of human rights law, all women must be entitled to the full enjoyment of their human rights which include participation in governance processes. Women are not a homogenous group of rights holders and discrimination against them can be expressed in many different forms and contexts.

As noted at the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women, there are more than one billion people with disabilities worldwide, and there are significant differences in the prevalence of disability between men and women in both developing and developed countries: male disability prevalence rate is 12 per cent while female disability prevalence rate is 19.2 per cent. That means that there are 600 girls and women with disabilities. Moreover, there is strong evidence to show that women and girls with disabilities disproportionally face greater poverty, lack of opportunities, and denial of political and social rights due to the persistence of certain cultural, legal and institutional barriers, which makes them the victims of multiple discrimination. They do not have access to public services sustainable infrastructure which are services provided for the state for all to enjoy due to the several limitations

and challenges in the design and conceptualisation of these services. For, policy makers fail to recognise the intersectional and multiple dimensions of the lives of women and girls with disabilities. Women with disabilities experience unique discrimination resulting from the interaction between their gender and disability and are at a higher risk of facing multiple forms of discrimination.

For the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and other international development strategies, it crucial to empower disadvantaged and support women and girls to engage stakeholders to find solutions for inclusion especially political participation to ensure that no woman is left behind.

Social protection systems help individuals and families, especially the poor and vulnerable, cope with crises and shocks, find jobs, improve productivity, invest in the health and education of their children, and protect the aging population.

Problems of disability are largely manifested in social contexts and social relations, rather than in an individual's medical condition. People living and interacting with persons with disabilities tend to treat them differently in relation to their disabilities. These discriminations prevent them from utilizing their full potential and contributing to national development thereby preventing of being education. Education and empowerment are strongly linked and given their denial of accessing education, these women consequently become a burden on the society.

A public service is a service provided by government for all its citizens. Every citizen in a given country has a right to the country's public services. Given that education and employment have a strong link to public service, which include jobs, wages etc women are therefore likely to be denied and not have equal access to public services. In a recent report by UN Women, on "Leave no one behind" on a gender audit, it was revealed that that inaccessibility of services, especially those provided by public institution, causes direct and indirect discrimination, social isolation and marginalization. In Africa, especially in the sub-Sahara Africa, most public buildings do not have disability compliance, hence, put a great challenge on women with disability to access the facilities for their health care thereby excluding them socially.

For the women with disability, the gap in infrastructure is a heavy burden as it further isolates and put a barrier for their participation and inclusion in all aspects of social process such as access to information, socio-economic and political process. As such compounding and multiplying their vulnerability at ali levels. Citing of these infrastructures do not take the most end users such as women and girls and especially women with disability who are physically challenges in diverse ways into considerations.

Recommendations:

1. Political participation and Inclusion in Sustainable Development Goal Implementation Planning

Women and girls with disabilities and other discriminations must be part of political processes on all levels. They shall speak for themselves and take decisions.

Also women and girls with disability especially must be a top priority in planning and designing of national development policies for the Sustainable Development Goals and "Leave No One Behind."

2. Social Protection

Social Protection for all needs to include multiple discriminated women and girls. Given the huge discrimination against women and girls with disability, social protection system must prioritise disadvantaged women and women with disability as a means to empower them economically and provide for their needs in the society.

3. Dis-aggregated data

National statistics and indicators women and girls must include a component on vulnerable women and girls especially women and girls with disability for an effective monitoring and reporting. Improving data on women disability will facilitate evidence to raise awareness of the scale of the problem and learning on how to address barriers is key

4. Legislation and implementation of legislation

The Sustainable Development Goal 5 strongly called all stakeholders to "Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels". It is not enough to adopt the policies to promote gender equality but there is to put in place effective implementation strategies for real results and outcome of these policies and legislation at the national level to ensure that all women and girls, which include women with disability, vulnerable and disadvantage women are not left behind in the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. Education

Less than 5 per cent of children and young persons with disabilities have access to education and training; and girls and young women face significant barriers to particip[illegible]ng in social life and development" (Secretary-General of the United Nations [illegible] his report on the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled, A/59/169, paragraph 79. This form of discrimination against girls and women must be addressed to address the wide gap on inequality that threaten sustainable development.